

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
March 23, 2009

For More Information, Contact:
Loreeta Canton
Stacy Eberl
Office of Public Information
North Dakota Department of Health
Phone: 701.328.2372
E-mail: lcanton@nd.gov
sleberl@nd.gov

State Health Department Emphasizes That Tetanus Vaccine Is Not Required During Flooding

BISMARCK, N.D. – Contact with flood waters does not increase your risk for tetanus, according to Kirby Kruger, state epidemiologist with the North Dakota Department of Health.

Tetanus is an infection caused by bacteria. Tetanus, also known as lockjaw, causes painful tightening of the muscles, usually all over the body. It can lead to “locking” of the jaw so the infected person cannot open his or her mouth or swallow. Tetanus leads to death in up to two cases out of 10. The bacteria enter the body through cuts or wounds. Adults should receive a tetanus shot every 10 years.

“People exposed to flood waters are not at any increased risk to tetanus just because of the water,” Kruger said. “The bigger risk is when people are doing clean-up work and have a greater chance for cuts and puncture wounds. Because of that risk, people who have not had a tetanus vaccine in the last 10 years should schedule an appointment when possible to receive their vaccine.”

The Department of Health also recommends the following advice for dealing with wounds:

- Wash your hands first before caring for the wound.
- Clean the wound with soap and water.
- Pat the wound area dry and apply a clean, dry dressing.
- Check with your doctor or clinic to see if you need a tetanus shot.

For more information, please contact Loreeta Canton or Stacy Eberl at 701.328.2372.

-- 30 --

Please note: To access archived news releases and other information, visit the North Dakota Department of Health Press Room at www.nddohpressroom.gov.